

SECTION XI

I am the State.—LOUIS XIV.

ABSOLUTISM OF THE CROWN—STRUGGLE FOR DOMINION IN EUROPE—REVOCATION OF THE EDICT OF NANTES—ATTEMPT TO GET POSSES- SION OF AMERICA. 1610-1774

LOUIS XIII, 1610-1643.

LOUIS XIV, 1643-1715.

LOUIS XV, 1715-1774.

135. Louis XIII; Regency of Marie de' Medici; the Concini.—The dagger that slew Henry IV inflicted a terrible blow on the welfare of France. The nation lost its chief guide and support before it had acquired strength and unity to take care of itself. Henry's son, Louis XIII, was not yet nine, and according to French custom, his mother, Marie de' Medici,¹ a foreigner by birth, became ruler during his minority. The queen mother soon found that her ideas of government and Sully's did not agree, and she dismissed her deceased husband's friend and counselor, after his twenty years' service to the state, in order that she might be free to carry out some petty schemes of marriage for her children.

Then Marie fell under the influence of an artful Italian, named Concini,² who with his wife soon got absolute control. Their ambition and greed knew no bounds. They used the public money to buy estates, offices, and honors for themselves

¹ Marie de' Medici, Henry IV's second wife. She was related to the pope. Her only recommendation was that she brought Henry an abundance of money.

² Concini (kon-chee'-nee).

and their relatives. They took bribes from those who wanted government favors, and they got a large revenue by selling pardons to rich criminals. The money which Henry IV had accumulated was wasted by them, and by Marie, in gifts, pensions, and salaries.

Still Concini and his friends were not satisfied. Now that they had plundered the royal treasury they wanted political power. It seemed as though their object was to tear France to pieces and divide it among themselves. One demanded the government of a fortified city, where he could virtually reign supreme; others had already taken possession of such places as pleased them, and refused to give them up. "Kings have had their turn," said the nobles, "now we will have ours."

136. The States-General of 1614.—The Prince of Condé, a Catholic by education, though the descendant of a Huguenot family, accused the queen mother of shameful waste and mismanagement, and, having taken up arms, demanded that a States-General¹ should be called to remedy these abuses. Marie quieted Condé and his party by the gift of large sums, and then very unwillingly summoned a States-General.

That body met in Paris in the autumn of 1614. It was composed of the nobles, clergy, and representatives of the people, but as the latter were powerless unless one or both of the former classes would vote with them, they had, as usual, to satisfy themselves with vain protests and vigorous speeches.

Each class had its grievances. Each loudly demanded reform; but as each was jealous of the other and sought relief purely for itself, nothing decisive was done.

The nobles denounced the presumption of the lower house in pretending to anything like equality with themselves. They furthermore expressed great indignation, because rich magistrates and lawyers in the towns had been allowed to buy

¹ States-General or national assembly: see Paragraph 71.

hereditary representation in the States-General. The clergy were not less indignant at the proposition that they should pay taxes. "That," said they, "would be giving to the state what belongs to God."

The deputies of the people, on whom all the burdens fell, were clamorous that the load should be lightened. Instead of paying all the bills of government, they thought it but fair that the upper classes should contribute part. It had become the custom for the crown to grant the rebellious nobles large pensions¹ in order to keep them quiet. Under the management of Marie and the Concinis, these pensions had doubled within four years.

The deputies demanded: (1) the reduction of these pensions; (2) the equalization of taxation in some degree; (3) the removal of ruinous restrictions on trade; (4) the better and cheaper administration of justice; (5) the summoning of a States-General at least once every ten years.

If we compare these demands made by the people of France with the rights and privileges already fully secured by the same class in England, we shall see how little the former really asked.² But they were denied even that little.

A petition was sent to the king humbly asking his consideration of these points. The deputies might as well have petitioned His Majesty's bronze statue in the garden of the Louvre. No answer was vouchsafed. The next time they went to their assembly room they found the doors locked, and were told by the official on duty that the queen mother wanted the hall for a dance!

The next national assembly that met was in 1789, just a hundred and seventy-five years later, when reform was to be sought not by petition, as in 1614, but by revolution.

¹ These pensions now amounted to about five million five hundred thousand francs, or more than one seventh of the entire revenue.

² See Paragraph 72, and consult *The Leading Facts of English History* in this series.

The nobles, who had compelled the convocation of the States-General, remained quiet for a time; then, when they had spent the money they had received and wanted more, they again took up arms. The government was not prepared to fight, and so bought another temporary peace at a cost of many millions; all of which, of course, came out of the pockets of the people.

137. Richelieu; De Luynes; Richelieu Prime Minister. — But the man was at hand who was to bring order out of chaos. One of the clerical members of the States-General of 1614 was Richelieu,¹ Bishop of Luçon.² Marie de' Medici had appointed him her almoner, or official dispenser of alms, and then he rose to be secretary of state. A few years later we shall find him prime minister and the real master of France.

Through his influence Condé was imprisoned and the rebellious nobles were stripped of their ill-gotten power. But the time had not come for him to take a permanent place in the government. Louis, who always needed some one to lean on, had found a new favorite, an army officer named Albert de Luynes.³

He not only supplanted the Concinis,⁴ but effectually disposed of them, getting the husband shot and the wife beheaded. He persuaded Louis to compel both the queen mother and Richelieu to leave the court, and then ruled supreme. When De Luynes died, a few years later, France was worse off than ever: the royal power was defied, the Protestants, disgusted with the government, were in revolt, and disorder everywhere prevailed.

Fortunately for the country, Marie and Louis now became reconciled, and Richelieu, who had been made a cardinal, came back to power. From that time (1624) until his death, eighteen years afterward, he was virtually king.

¹ Richelieu (rêsh'êh-loo or rêsh-le-uh').

² Luçon (lû-sôn').

³ De Luynes (deh lû-ên').

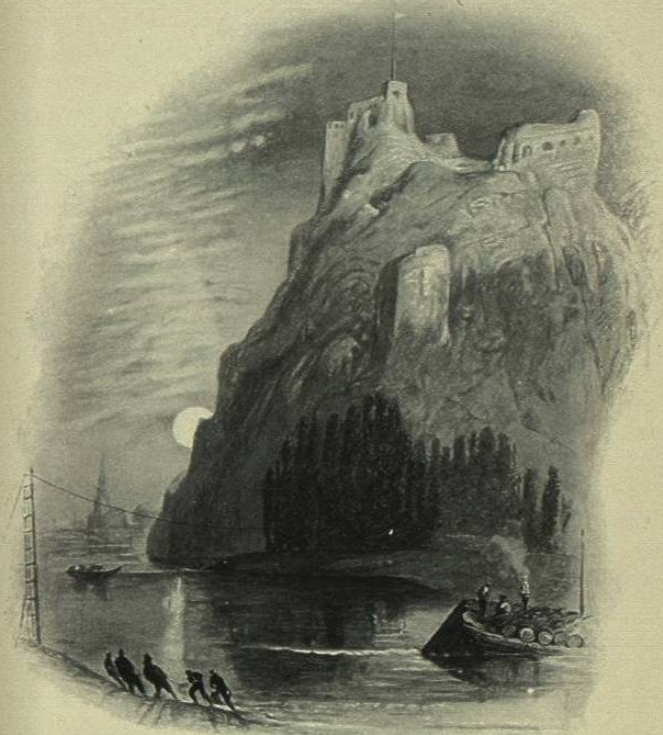
⁴ See Paragraph 135.

138. Richelieu's Policy ; his Impartial Severity. — His government may be considered from two points of view : (1) his policy respecting France ; (2) his policy toward foreign powers. His first object was to make everything subservient to the interests of the crown. He was no tyrant, yet in one sense he labored, and labored successfully, to establish an impartial and enlightened despotism. He did this, not because he loved despotism, but because he hated anarchy.

In pursuance of this purpose, he executed the law without respect to persons. The nobleman who committed a capital crime could no longer buy exemption from the penalty. Lord and peasant were executed side by side. As the cardinal declared on his deathbed, he had endeavored to be just to all. "I have had no enemies," said he, "but those who were enemies of France."

If he erred, it was on the side of pitiless severity toward the great. There were times, indeed, when he almost made the scaffold a means of government. For swindling contractors who robbed the state he had no mercy. They had their choice either to disgorge their stolen wealth or repent their misdeeds in another world ; for here, Richelieu would not tolerate them. Quarrelsome nobles he soon taught to be careful how and when they drew their swords. Those that dared rebel, even though it was the king's own brother or the Duke of Montmorency, speedily felt the grasp of his iron hand.

139. Richelieu destroys Castles ; establishes Provincial Courts and Governors. — The owners of the great feudal castles had often used them as fortresses, where they intrenched themselves and defied the king. Richelieu dismantled the most formidable of these strongholds, such as the Château Gaillard, mentioned on page 80, and in some cases he leveled them to the ground. At the same time he abolished certain high offices in the army and navy, which had given those who held them almost unlimited power.



THE CHÂTEAU GAILLARD ("SAUCY CASTLE")

On the other hand, he revived the provincial courts of justice, and enabled the laboring man to bring suit against his titled oppressors. In a single session these tribunals punished more than two hundred nobles by fine or imprisonment.

Next, Richelieu reformed the system of government in the provinces. The administration in such cases had been monopolized by the aristocracy. The Montmorency family had ruled in Languedoc¹ for so many generations that the common people, it is said, believed that there was no higher authority, and that the king was an imaginary being. Richelieu convinced them to the contrary. He indeed left the provincial governors their official title, but he took away their power and gave it to agents of the crown.²

With the exception of the organization of the standing army by Charles VII,³ feudalism had received no blow so damaging as this.

140. Increase of the Power of the Crown; Revolts; Richelieu versus the People. — From this time the royal authority rapidly advanced. Formerly the laws had been prefaced with the words, "Enacted by the King, with the consent of the people." The last clause meant nothing — it was simply a polite flourish; but even that empty rhetorical phrase was now dropped, and the edicts began abruptly with the declaration, "Such is our pleasure." The change was slight, but it was none the less significant.

Richelieu's decided measures excited opposition and rebellion; but he put down every revolt. The very last year of his life, when sick unto death, he discovered the boldest of all these conspiracies, and he sent Cinq-Mars,⁴ its leader, to the scaffold.

Though he believed in justice, the cardinal had little real sympathy with what we call the masses. He did nothing

¹ Languedoc (lɔ̃n-ge-dòk'): a province in the south of France.

² These agents were called Intendants; they really governed the provinces.

³ See Paragraph 85.

⁴ Cinq-Mars (sɔ̃k-mars').

toward encouraging their political representation. He believed heavy taxes were good to keep down the body of the nation, and thought that if the burden was lightened too much the working classes would soon become unmanageable. His policy was fatally narrow. It resembled that of George III of England, whose favorite motto, "Everything *for*, but nothing *by*, the people," helped to bring on the American Revolution.

141. Richelieu and the Huguenots; La Rochelle; Richelieu's Labors for France. — Toward the Protestants as a political organization Richelieu was implacable. At the outset of his ministry he declared, "I will employ all the authority the king shall be pleased to give me to ruin the Huguenot¹ party."

He was not without some good reasons for this resolution. Oppression had in many cases rendered the Huguenots hard, narrow, bitter. The invariable effect of religious intolerance is to make its victims bigots, who, when they get the opportunity, become persecutors in their turn.

In the past the Huguenots had too often been treated as enemies of France. That policy had separated them in great measure from the rest of the nation. Politically considered, this party now endangered the unity of the realm. The Duke de Rohan² and other haughty and half-rebellious nobles belonged to them. In some cases, notably in the province of Béarn,³ the Huguenots had refused to tolerate the Catholic worship, and had seized the property of the Church. In 1620 Louis reinstated the Catholics in their former rights in this province.

This caused a revolt, in which the Huguenots were beaten, and all their fortified cities except two — Montauban⁴ and La Rochelle — taken from them. The Huguenots, instead of

¹ See Paragraph 109.

² Rohan (ro-ŃN').

³ Béarn (bē-ārn'): a province in the southwest of France.

⁴ Montauban (mŃN-tŃ-bŃN'): a town of southern France, about one hundred and ten miles southeast of Bordeaux.

submitting, prepared for a new struggle. They could still make desperate resistance, for they had organized the seven hundred societies of their faith into a kind of religious and political confederacy.

The war began at La Rochelle. The Protestant leaders, believing that the king was intending to take the control of that city out of their hands, made a sudden attack on some royal ships, and seizing them towed them into the harbor of the city. Louis at once began the blockade of the place, which now virtually renounced the king's authority, and proclaimed itself a Protestant republic.

Richelieu wished to attack La Rochelle by sea as well as by land, but had no fleet. Such was his address, however, that he actually succeeded in borrowing ships for that purpose from the two great Protestant powers of England and Holland. The Huguenots, in their extremity, had sought aid from the Spaniards, who were not only the enemies of France, but of their religion. The Spaniards promised their assistance. This fact irritated the Protestant powers of England and Holland, and made them willing to lend Richelieu the ships. Richelieu next made a treaty of peace with Spain, in order to have his hands free.

Then he organized his forces and began blockading the city on the land side, and building a stupendous sea wall to cut off all help from foreign fleets. Quietly, patiently, steadily, the work went on under the cardinal's personal superintendence, until, as he said, all was ready "to give the last blow to the last head of the rebellion."

Meanwhile, Charles I., who had now become king of England, felt obliged to make a show, at least, of helping the besieged Huguenots, and sent out three successive fleets which accomplished nothing. The city held out against the cardinal's forces for fifteen months. At the end of that time no less than fifteen thousand people, or half of the population, had died of

starvation. The garrison, reduced to a hundred and fifty soldiers, could resist no longer. On the 29th of October, 1628, they opened the gates. Richelieu entered the last stronghold of the Huguenots. The city which had been their pride and boast forfeited its rights and privileges, and its fortifications were demolished.

With the fall of La Rochelle the religious wars which began in 1562 — nearly seventy years before — came to an end, never to be renewed, and Protestantism, considered as a political organization, ceased to exist. Richelieu showed that he was no bigot, for he granted the Huguenots liberty of worship and civil equality, thus confirming the Edict of Nantes.¹

Henceforth the lives and property of Protestants were to be protected so long as they remained in France. Richelieu, however, forbade their emigrating to Canada, for he feared that they might unite with the English Protestants of America, or that they would make heretics of the Indians. This prohibition drove many Huguenots to settle in the English colonies, and made them enemies of France. The prime minister's policy of religious toleration at home was so far misunderstood in that age that the extreme Church party sneeringly styled him "the Huguenot's Cardinal."

But this wise conciliation had such effect on the Protestants that many of their leading men conformed to the worship of the established Church of France, and thus gave their support to moderate Catholicism.

Like Henry IV, Richelieu did much to encourage industry and commerce. He also established the first regular political newspaper in France.² He founded the French Academy, and he labored assiduously for the higher education of the clergy. Thus in every department, save the most important of all, —

¹ See Paragraph 132.

² *La Gazette de France*, 1631. A French literary paper, *Le Mercure Français*, had appeared under Henry IV in 1605. The earliest regular newspaper in England came out in 1622.

that of the extension of the political rights of the people, — France felt and acknowledged his re-creative and uplifting power.

142. Richelieu's Foreign Policy; the Thirty Years' War; Death of Richelieu. — Richelieu's foreign policy may be summed up in three lines: first, to humble still further the declining power of Spain, so long the rival and enemy of France; next, to enlarge the dominion of the French crown on the north and east.

"As far as Gaul reached," said the great cardinal, "so far shall France extend." On the north, the Netherlands,¹ once, in large measure, part of Gaul,² were now divided into the Dutch Republic (Holland) and the Spanish Netherlands (Belgium).³ It was this last-named country which Richelieu hoped to add to the possessions of his master, Louis XIII. These designs, though only partially successful, added greatly to the prime minister's brilliant fame, and prepared the way for the rise of France, in the next reign, to its highest power, or at least to the highest which it reached before Napoleon.

Since 1618 the house of Austria had been engaged in that tremendous struggle with the Protestant party in Germany, which from its duration received the name of the Thirty Years' War. Just as the Reformation had divided France into Catholic and Huguenot factions, so, since the time of Luther, Germany had been in a state of political and religious disunion. The Emperor Charles V and his successors had used every means — force, cruelty, and persuasion — to subdue or reconcile the conflicting parties, but all in vain. In 1618 the Protestants of Bohemia rose in revolt against the intolerant measures of their king, Ferdinand II. A year later he became emperor, and resolved at any cost to crush Protestantism and compel all Germany to bow to one ruler and subscribe to one creed.

¹ See Paragraph 90.

² See Paragraph 1 and note.

³ The Spanish Netherlands did not, however, extend as far north as Belgium now does.

Richelieu, though he had no sympathy with the Protestants, was yet quite willing to aid that party in Germany. In this he was actuated by a double motive: first, by so doing he could strike a blow against Spain, since Austria and Spain were allied by blood and by their political relations; secondly, if Germany could be dismembered, France might seize some of her territory for herself. He began by giving the Protestants large grants of money; but finally determined to aid them in the field.

Wallenstein,¹ the leader of the imperial army, was everywhere victorious. Unless checked in his career, the whole of Germany would have to submit to the will of the emperor, who might next proceed to attack France for her interference in the war.

The cardinal had already begun a contest with Spain in Italy. He now entered into a treaty with Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, a zealous Protestant, who was ready to give his life for the cause of his German brethren. Gustavus gathered an army and attacked Wallenstein's force. The Swedes went into battle singing Luther's grand hymn, "A mighty fortress is our God."

In two years the "Lion of the North," as Gustavus was now called, had gained so much ground that Protestantism seemed likely to triumph. In his last victorious battle the great Swedish general was killed; but Austria had suffered so many defeats that France no longer feared any danger from that quarter. Three years later the emperor made peace with most of the Protestant provinces of Germany; but Richelieu continued a war which promised to add greatly to the power of the crown of France. Even in his last illness, this wonderful man did not cease to plan the movements of his armies abroad and to superintend affairs of state at home.

At his death, in 1642, he left Louis XIII master of the field. As Montesquieu² said, the cardinal "had made his sovereign play the second part in France, but the first in Europe."

¹ Wallenstein (wöl'en-stīn or vāl'en-stīn).

² Montesquieu (mōn-tēs-kū' or mōn-tēs-kēh-uh').

Richelieu gained his success by always going straight to his mark. Well might Peter the Great of Russia exclaim, as he enthusiastically embraced his statue in Paris, "I would have given half my dominions to have learned from thee how to govern the other half." Yet the French people were to pay a heavy price for the glory of having produced such a man.

In reality the cardinal had prepared the way for the ultimate triumph of one despotic will, and for the destruction of all political and religious liberty in France. Six months after his death the king died, leaving a child of five, Louis XIV, as his successor.

143. Minority of Louis XIV; Mazarin; Treaty of Westphalia.—The reign of Louis XIV extends nominally over a period of seventy-two years, or from 1643 to 1715. For convenience we may divide it into three parts:

I. That of the ministry of Cardinal Mazarin,¹ 1643-1661.

II. That of the administration of Colbert, 1661-1683.

III. That of the decline of the king's power, 1683-1715.

The queen mother, Anne of Austria, who became regent at the death of Louis XIII, chose for her chief counselor Cardinal Mazarin, an Italian by birth, who had been an intimate friend of Richelieu's. He boasted that, though his speech had a foreign accent, his heart was wholly French. But the people distrusted his smooth ways and, contrasting him with Richelieu, said, "After the lion comes the fox."

Mazarin pursued, in a measure, the policy of his distinguished predecessor. The Thirty Years' War was still in progress, and he continued the contest against the emperor of Germany, or, in other words, against the house of Austria.

Under the splendid generalship of Turenne² and of "the great Condé"³ victory favored the French, and in 1648 the

¹ Mazarin (mä-zä-rän' or mä-zä-reen'). ² Turenne (tü-rēn' or tü-rēn').

³ Condé: son of Prince of Condé; his title then was Duke of Enghien (on-gän'); after his father's death he became Prince of Condé.

emperor begged for peace. The Treaty of Westphalia¹ ended the long contest. The house of Austria, thoroughly beaten and humiliated, was forced to give France possession of all towns and rights which she held in Alsace;² so that Louis XIV's kingdom now extended on the east to the Rhine, and in one case to the town of Breisach,³ on the farther bank of that river.

Austria furthermore acknowledged the independence of the republics of Holland and of Switzerland, made concessions to Sweden, and formally recognized the religious liberty of the Protestant states of Germany, besides granting them an increase of political power.

144. The Fronde; St. Vincent de Paul; the King's Marriage; End of the Spanish War. — But the very year that the Treaty of Westphalia was signed, an outbreak occurred in Paris which threatened to overthrow Mazarin's power and to revolutionize the government.

The reform party, nicknamed the Fronde,⁴ was the result of the reaction against the despotic policy inaugurated by Richelieu and continued by his successor. The loyal ministers had so far destroyed whatever checks had existed on the king's

¹ Westphalia: a province of Prussia, bordering on Holland. The treaty receives its name from the fact that the congresses that negotiated it met in different cities of the province. Among the towns of Alsace granted or confirmed to France by this treaty (Strasburg was not included) were the three bishoprics of Metz, Toul, and Verdun, conquered by Henry II. See Paragraph 106.

² Alsace: now a province of Germany, on the eastern border of France, but for a long period included in French territory. See Map XI, page 236.

³ Breisach (brí'zák): a town of Baden, Germany, on the right bank of the Rhine.

⁴ Fronde: literally, a sling, such as boys then used in their street fights. The watchmen or police of that day tried to stop this fighting; but as soon as their backs were turned, the stones would begin to fly again. A member of the Parliament of Paris, who was strongly opposed to Mazarin's policy, said that the cardinal could no more suppress the parliamentary opposition to his measures than the watchmen could stop the *frondeurs*, or slingers. From that time the Fronde became the popular name for the reform movement, and also for the insurrections to which it gave rise. Those who stood on the cardinal's side were called Mazarinists; those who attacked him and his party, Frondeurs.

power or his abuse of it, that neither the aristocracy, the Parliament of Paris, nor the people had any real part in the government.

The distress of the country was great. The expense of so many years of foreign war had increased the taxes enormously, and thousands of poor people died in jail through inability to pay them. It was said that in some provinces "the peasant no longer possessed anything but his soul, the officers of the government having seized and sold everything else at auction."

The king's credit had fallen so low that he could not borrow money under twenty-five per cent interest. On all sides matters looked critical, and many believed that the realm would become bankrupt.

It was under these circumstances that the first Fronde, or reform party, was organized. It originated with the action of the Parliament of Paris.¹ That court (1648) refused to register a royal decree imposing new financial burdens on the exhausted country. By an Act of Union² the parliament combined with the three other chief courts of the city under Matthew Molé³ as president, and took the name of the Chamber of St. Louis.

The chamber demanded: (1) that the taxes then in force should be reduced, and that no further taxes should be levied except with the consent of the Parliament of Paris; (2) that the arbitrary imprisonment of persons not convicted of crime should cease; (3) that the office of royal provincial governors (*intendants*)⁴ should be abolished.

¹ See Paragraph 63.

² Mazarin ridiculed the Act of Union, or "Onion," as he pronounced it in his broken French. The populace of Paris ridiculed him in turn in a street song, one line of which ran, "This 'Onion' will make you shed tears."

³ Molé (mo-lá').

⁴ This was an attempt to secure the writ of Habeas Corpus, passed in England at a later date.

⁵ The provincial parliaments regarded these governors (*intendants*, see Paragraph 139) with great jealousy.

For a time the Unionists bade fair to emulate that famous Long Parliament¹ in England which had overthrown so many abuses. But the news of the execution of Charles I., Louis XIV's uncle-in-law, by that body, — or the remnant of it, — and of English treaties with Spain, frightened the French reformers. They feared that they had gone too far: visions of popular revolution on the one hand, and, on the other, of a war with Spain and England combined, put a stop to their further action. The Unionists therefore accomplished nothing.

The nobility had also organized a Fronde, but solely for the redress of their private grievances. It speedily degenerated into a vain and frivolous movement, ending in silly parade and empty declamation.

Last of all, the rabble of Paris and of other large cities got up their Fronde, partly because of the arrest of some of their favorites, and partly in feeble imitation of the English revolutionists. Meantime, while the mob amused themselves with building barricades in the streets of the capital, playing at civil war, and threatening what great things they would do, the country people, who took no part in any of the movements, were suffering horribly at the hands of bands of nobles and foreign mercenaries, who ravaged the land.

While these disturbances were at their height, the queen mother, with Condé's help, blockaded Paris. A compromise was now effected between the government and the city; but the peace did not last long; the people again rose, Mazarin was forced to go into temporary exile in Germany, and the Paris populace, filled with joy, sang in the streets, —

A Fronde-ly wind
Got up to-day;
'Gainst Mazarin
It howls, they say.

¹ See The Leading Facts of English History in this series.

But it did not howl long, for the queen mother and Condé quarreled, and he left the city to raise a force in the south against Paris. Anne now declared Louis XIV old enough to rule, and he thus became king in his fourteenth year. Meanwhile Mazarin came back, and Turenne, who for a short time had sided with the Fronde, received command of the royal army. He and Condé had a battle, which by chance resulted in the latter's getting possession of Paris; but, not being able to have his own way in everything, he left the city in disgust and traitorously joined the Spaniards.

Shortly afterward the young king with his mother entered Paris in triumph. A royal edict sentenced the absent Condé to death for treason. A second forbade the Parliament of Paris¹ to discuss affairs of state, which edict they now humbly accepted and registered against themselves.

Thus ignominiously ended the child's play of the Fronde. It had begun by demanding the restraint of the excessive authority of the crown, the recognition of the constitutional rights of the people, and lastly the establishment of parliamentary government after the English model. It failed in everything, and the king caused a statue of himself to be erected, in which he was represented as triumphantly trampling on the helpless people of France. Outside of the royal will there was no government. The king could now arrogantly say, "I am the State."²

One of the bright features of these stormy times was the work of the Catholic missionary and philanthropist, Vincent de Paul. He had already distinguished himself by his self-sacrificing labors in nearly every field of benevolent effort. Even the wretched galley slaves found a friend in him when they could find none elsewhere; and he also organized the

¹ See Paragraph 63.

² This famous saying, attributed to Louis XIV, has been called in question by some recent writers. Whether true in letter or not, it certainly is in spirit, since the king's entire reign was in accordance with it.

institution of the Sisters of Charity to minister to the sufferings of the destitute sick.

During the civil war of the Fronde he devoted himself to the relief of the multitude of orphan and homeless children perishing in the streets. The poor called him "the agent of Providence," and after his death the pope conferred on him that title of saint which thousands would have gladly voted him during his life.

Peace now reigned at home, but the war with Spain continued until 1659, when the marriage of the king to the Spanish princess, Maria Theresa,¹ put an end to hostilities. Mazarin had long planned this union, in the hope that it would eventually result in annexing the dominions of Spain to France. We shall see later that the marriage was prolific in long-continued wars, which at last brought irrecoverable disaster upon Louis XIV.

145. Colbert succeeds Mazarin; the King becomes his own Minister. — As Richelieu left his friend Mazarin to succeed him, so Mazarin in turn left one of his friends, a provincial governor named Colbert,² to take his place. The cardinal had not found his office unprofitable, having accumulated a colossal fortune through it, as report said, by plundering the state. Just before his death in 1661 he said to the king, "Sire, I owe everything to you, but I believe that I pay at least part of the debt in leaving you Colbert."

Colbert, however, notwithstanding his remarkable ability, was not destined to exercise that unquestioned power which Mazarin had possessed. On the news of the cardinal's death, the secretary of state obtained an audience with the king, then twenty-three. "To whom, Sire," he asked, "shall we now apply for instructions?" "To me," replied Louis.

The secretary was astonished, as well he might be, at the idea of the king's taking the management of the government

¹ Theresa (tə-ree'sə).

² Colbert (kol-bêr').

directly into his own hands. But he found, with others, that the will of this young man was destined to be "one of the strongest human elements in the seventeenth century." Louis pursued the new policy not only with respect to the affairs of France, but also with the colonies, and the governor of Canada received orders to make his official reports directly to the crown.

For the next thirty years His Majesty labored as diligently at his task of ruling the state as any peasant did in digging the soil. Every morning Louis began his self-appointed duty, and spent eight full hours in the consideration of public affairs. When urged not to apply himself so closely, he replied, "To rule by work is the true secret of power."

146. Colbert's Reforms in Finance, Industry, Education, and Law. — Louis was able to accomplish so much mainly because he had able and faithful assistants, with Colbert at their head. Colbert had the control not only of the finances, but also of the departments of public works, agriculture, commerce, the royal household, and the navy. Next to the king, he embodied and represented France.

He began his administration by reorganizing the treasury. Where there was confusion, recklessness, waste, and dishonesty he introduced order, economy, integrity. Out of eighty million francs of revenue the king had received only about thirty millions; the rest stuck to the fingers of those who handled it. Colbert stopped this system of public plunder. Each year he presented the king with the budget — an estimate of the expenses and resources of the government.

Thus for the first time the French sovereign knew how his accounts stood. Furthermore, Colbert, instead of increasing the taxes, managed to equalize and reduce them to a degree never before attempted. The result was that the credit of the crown rapidly improved, and the government could borrow money at reasonable rates. This enabled Louis to begin

and carry on those gigantic wars which he was soon to undertake.

In his other departments Colbert displayed equal industry and obtained equal results. He protected and built up home industries. He encouraged better methods of agriculture and introduced new and superior breeds of cattle. He stimulated emigration and trade with the French colonies in America and the Indies. He created the first royal navy in France worthy of the name. He planned and constructed a vast system of roads, bridges, docks, canals, and other public works, one of which, the "Canal of the Two Seas," uniting the waters of the Atlantic with those of the Mediterranean, may be justly regarded as one of the greatest works of that age.¹

In addition to these undertakings, Colbert showed marked interest in literature, art, and science. He opened the Mazarin Library in Paris to the public. He established schools of painting, sculpture, music, and architecture in the capital and the provinces. He obtained honors and pensions from the king for the most distinguished men of science and letters not only of France, but of foreign countries. "Although the king is not your sovereign," wrote Colbert to Vossius, a learned Protestant divine of Holland, "he chooses to be your benefactor."

Finally, he turned his attention to the revision of the statutes. Through his influence the confused mass of conflicting laws of the realm were systematized and reduced to six improved codes, and some of the most barbarous of the criminal laws were either repealed or modified for the better.

147. Louvois and Vauban. — While Colbert was thus engaged Louvois,² minister of war, was putting the army on a more efficient basis. He ordered that each corps should have a distinctive uniform, and substituted the musket armed with that formidable weapon, the bayonet, for the clumsy pike which

¹ It connects the port of Cette on the Mediterranean with Toulouse on the Garonne, and thence with Bordeaux on the Atlantic. ² Louvois (loo-vvā').

had so long been in use. The aristocratic cavalry had formerly been the chief dependence of the army; but now all was changed, and the foot soldiers, sons of laborers not of lords, came to the front, bayonet in hand.

At the same time Vauban,¹ the ablest civil and military engineer of the age, built a chain of forts² on the north-eastern boundary of the kingdom, which henceforth became known as the "Iron Frontier." As France had no adequate port in the north, he converted the shallow haven of Dunkerque³ into a deep and capacious harbor for the king's men-of-war, and defended it with a line of batteries that, like the "Iron Frontier," defied attack.

In the field Vauban taught the captains how to fight with the spade as well as with the sword. Through his instruction they learned to approach the enemy's works under cover of parallel lines of ditches and intrenchments. In this way he saved France thousands of lives that would otherwise have been sacrificed in the fury of a direct assault.

His method was slow but irresistible. As the boa constrictor tightens his folds round his helpless victim, so Vauban gradually contracted his fatal line of earthworks. Constant practice in besieging fortifications had made him so expert that when he had once dug his trenches in front of the enemy's camp he could generally predict to a day when they would have to surrender. It was said of him that during war he spent his time taking cities for France, and during peace in fortifying them so that they could never be retaken.⁴

¹ Vauban (vō-bōn').

² This chain of forts was gradually extended until it embraced Lille, Metz, Strasburg, and other important cities, not only on the east, but also on the north.

³ Dunkerque (dūn-kērk'): on the North Sea, above Calais.

⁴ Vauban perfected the bayonet so that it could be kept permanently in place during the battle. Before he made his simple but effective improvement this weapon had been fastened in the muzzle of the musket, and had of course to be removed whenever the gun was fired. Vauban also invented a peculiar system of using artillery, — "ricochet firing," — which he employed in dismounting the enemy's cannon.

148. **Absolute Power of the King.** — By the help of such men and of his great generals, Turenne, Condé,¹ Luxembourg,² and Vendôme,³ Louis XIV made himself supreme both at home and abroad. In England James I. and his unfortunate son Charles had tried to force the nation to accept the theory that kings reign by divine right,⁴ and are in no way directly responsible to their subjects. Charles pushed that monstrous doctrine too far; the long-suffering people rose in revolution, and the king's head rolled in the dust at their feet.

But Louis XIV had no fear of such consequences. In France there was no parliament or assembly to gainsay his will. Now that the Fronde was crushed, all opposition was destroyed. The king's standing army could speedily silence every murmur. Those who dared question his authority soon found an answer to their rashness, in a dungeon, where they were quite likely to spend the rest of their days.

Bossuet,⁵ the eloquent court preacher, said: "Kings are gods; they bear on their forehead a divine character. . . . To speak evil of the king is almost equal to blasphemy." Louis believed this as firmly as Bossuet. He considered himself absolute master of Church and State; the whole of France was his property. In his eyes a subject had nothing except what he graciously chose to permit him to retain.

149. **Louis builds the Palace of Versailles; his Court.** — We have seen that Francis I. originated the court;⁶ Louis XIV perfected it. The king did not like Paris as a residence; there were too many statues of preceding kings there to suit him, and besides, the Paris people were turbulent. He did not like St. Germain, which was a short distance out of the city, any better, because from there he saw the towers of

¹ Condé had been pardoned and had returned to his allegiance.

² Luxembourg (lûks-ôn-boor').

³ Vendôme (vôn-dôm').

⁴ See The Leading Facts of English History in this series.

⁵ Bossuet (bo-sü-â').

⁶ See Paragraph 98.

St. Denis, the royal burial place, and those towers reminded him that he was mortal.

For these reasons he determined to build a new palace at Versailles, about twelve miles southwest of Paris. Louis XIII had erected a chateau there, which the king took as a nucleus for a colossal structure large enough to accommodate the chief nobility of the realm.

The place was naturally barren and unattractive. Louis transformed it into a magnificent park by transplanting whole groves of forest trees to cover the naked sand, and by constructing immense waterworks, which supplied it with lakes, streams, cascades, and fountains. Such were the surroundings of the new abode of royalty, which cost millions of money, twenty years of continuous labor, and the sacrifice of the lives of regiments of soldiers employed in digging a canal to bring water to the palace.

The palace itself was on a commensurate scale of grandeur. The seemingly endless succession of apartments, galleries, chambers, and corridors were filled with statuary, paintings, mirrors, and tapestry. Everywhere one saw the emblem of the king, — a rising sun illuminating and giving life to the world.

In the palace, four thousand servants waited on Louis and his court; in the stables, there was a stud of five thousand horses; in the barracks, a bodyguard of ten thousand troops. This royal residence was believed to be the envy of all the monarchs of Europe, and La Fontaine wrote his fable of the frog that tried to swell himself up to the size of an ox, and burst in the effort, to ridicule the attempts of other kings to rival Versailles.

150. **Life at Versailles.** — Here Louis gathered all the men of rank and note of France. Here they lived. The sovereign was the center; the courtiers were planets revolving about him and shining by the reflected light of his splendor.